

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 3987

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP, SS, UN, US

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH WALDHEIM: SAHARA PROBLEM

REF: SECTO 4127

1. SPAIN'S FORMAL POSITION ON THE SAHARA--THAT IT HAS TERMINATED ITS ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITITES AND THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO MEANINGFUL SELF-DETERMINATION EXERCISE (AS CALLED FOR BY VARIOUS UNGA RESOLUTIONS WHILE SPAIN HAS ACCEPTED)--WAS A DIPLOMATICALLY ADEPT MEANS OF DISENGAGEMENT, BUT THE GOS REMAINS DEEPLY INTERESTED IN DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION. IF ITS OVERALL GOALS THERE ARE THE PRESERVATION OF PEACE AND THEREFORE OF AN AT LEAST APPROXIMATE PARITY BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA, ITS EFFORT TO MAINTAIN WORKABLE RELATIONS WITH BOTH COUNTIRES HAS FOUND SUBSTANTIAL SUCCESS WITH NEITHER: WHILE SYMPATHETIC TO MOROCCO'S PROBLEMS WITH ALGERIAN-BACKED POLISARIO ACTIVITIES, IT HAS BEEN TROUBLED BY ONGOING DIFFERENCES WITH ITS TRADITIONAL SAHARA ANTAGONIST OVER SUCH SPECIFICS AS FISHING IN THE AREA;

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AS FOR ALGERIA, GROWING ECONOMIC TIES HAVE NOT OVERCOME SPANISH IRRITATION AT THE FACILITIES PROVIDED CNARAIAS INDEPENDENTIST CUBILLO, NOR GOS CONCERN OVER WHAT IT VIEWS AS ALGERIA'S ULTIMATE GOAL OF HEGEMONY IN THE MAHGREG. ADDITIONALLY, THE GOS IS CONSCIOUS OF ALGERIAN RESENTMENT OF THE SPANISH ARMS SUPPLIED TO MOROCCO.

2. SPANISH OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN FRANKLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE SHORT-TERM PROSPECTS FOR A SOLUTION IN THE SAHARA, AS WAS NOTED MOST RECENTLY IN THE CONVERSATIONS WITH ASST. SECY ATHERTON AND DEPUTY ASST. SECY SOBER. IN THOSE SAME TALKS, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR AFRICA AND CONTINENTAL ASIA PUT FORTH AS A PERSONAL THOUGHT THE IDEA THAT AN EVENTUAL SOLUTION MIGHT TAKE THE FORM OF SOME KIND OF AUTONOMY FOR THE SAHARANS, COUPLED WITH SPECIAL MEASURES AIMED AT THE PARTICULAR INTERESTS OF THE THREE NEIGHBORS (E.G. MAURITANIA'S TRIBAL TIES, MOROCCO'S INTERESTS IN THE NATURAL RESOURCES, AND ALGERIA'S INTEREST IN ACCESS TO THE ATLANTIC). HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT AUTONOMY FOR THE SAHARANS MIGHT PROVE TROUBLING TO MAURITANIA'S ARAB POPULATION, AND HAVE A SIMILAR DEVISIVE EFFECT ON OTHER COUNTRY'S (HE NAMED MALI, NIGER, AND CHAD) WITH ARAB POPULATIONS.

3. IF THE U.S. DECIDES TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANY SORT OF INITIATIVE ON THE SAHARA, WE URGE THAT WE CONSULT WITH THE GOS AT AN EARLY STAGE, IF ONLY ON A CLOSELY HELD BASIS. SUCH CONSULTATION IS NOT ONLY ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH OUR TREATY RELATIONSHIP, BUT IN ADDITION, SPAIN'S LONG-TIME EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA SUGGESTS THE GOS MIGHT HAVE SOME HELPFUL INSIGHTS. STABLER

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